U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
White River Field Office
73544 Hwy 64
Meeker, CO 81641

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

NUMBER: CO-110-2005-40 -EA

CASEFILE/PROJECT NUMBER (optional): Allotments 06005, 06007

PROJECT NAME: North Dry Fork Water Developments

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: T1N, R97W Sec 11 NESE
T1N R97W Sec 14, 23, 24
T1N R96W Sec 30, 31

APPLICANT: Mike Lopez, Shults LLP

ISSUES AND CONCERNS (optional):

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES:

Background/Introduction: The proposed action involves three distinct projects in the North Dry Fork pasture of the Dry Fork allotment (06005, 06007) in Piceance Basin. This allotment is a spring use pasture within the Dry Fork allotment management plan which was analyzed in detail in the Shults/Lopez Permit Renewal EA CO-110-WRFO-01-051, approved 3/25/02. From June 3- 10, 2004 the Greasewood fire burned 8,000 acres; about 3,000 of these acres are within the North Dry Fork allotment. Approximately half of this area, or 1500 acres was either drilled or aerially seeded in October and November of this year. In order to insure the success of the revegetation effort, it is necessary to prevent livestock use of the seeded area for a minimum of two growing seasons. Mike Lopez and Shults LLP, the grazing permittees, have agreed to close the Dry Fork watergap, a principal livestock water source for the allotment in order to keep cattle off the seeded area to help achieve our revegetation objectives. Therefore, there is an immediate need to provide some alternative water sources. This is part of the rationale for the proposed improvements.

Proposed Action: The proposed action consists of three separate actions. See attached maps (2) for project locations.

Proposed action #1 is construction of 3/8 miles of 4-strand barbwire type D fence to create a watergap on Piceance Creek just below the CDOW riparian fence on the lower end of Piceance Creek within the Dry fork allotment. This fence will tie onto the CDOW fence on the west side

of Piceance Creek, go northeasterly for about 1/8 mile, corner 90 degrees , and then run about ¼ mile SSE, tying into a steep shale rim. The location of the proposed action is T 1 N, R 97 W, Sec 11, NENE. Total disturbance associated with this project will be no more than .25 acres, and much likely will be less. The fence line right of way on the Piceance Creek bench will be brushed with a bobcat or cleared with a rotary brush beater. Soil disturbance will be kept to the minimum necessary to facilitate construction of a straight fenceline.

Proposed action #2 is the Open Gulch pump, pipeline and storage project. The intent of this project is to provide a dependable water source up Open Gulch, approximately one mile southeast of Piceance Creek to improve livestock distribution on spring range. The location of the project is T1N, R97W Sec 14, 23, and 24. The pump location on Piceance Creek will be on BLM property T1N, R97W Sec 22, NENENE. A pipeline would be constructed due east in section 23, around the point of the hill, up the draw then northeast over the low saddle into Open Gulch in Sec. 23. Maximum estimated water usage would be 4000 gallons per day for 40 days. This equates to .006 cubic feet per second (cfs) or a total of .24 cfs for the forty-day period. The pipeline will be buried about two feet deep and will have drains at appropriate locations. All excavation, trenching, and grading will be done using a backhoe/trackhoe and small D-5 size caterpillar tractor or small caterpillar with a V ditcher attachment. Typically the pipeline will be buried at a depth from 1 to 2 feet below the ground surface. Total pipeline disturbance will be 1.5 acres and total storage and stock tank placement disturbance will be 0.1 acres. The work will be completed by either the BLM Force Account crew or a private contractor in April and May of 2005. All disturbed areas will be promptly recontoured and revegetated with Native Seed mix # 3 listed in the table below.

Proposed Action #3 is the Ernie Howard pump, pipeline and storage. The design and construction of this pump, pipeline and storage system will be virtually identical to the Open Gulch system. The pump will be located on CDOW property in SWSW Sec 31, T1N R96W where there is WREA power. Lopez and Shults will obtain an easement for that part of the project on CDOW property. A 1 and ½ inch SDR 11 pipeline of about 3/8 miles in length will be built from the pump location across CDOW property and then across BLM lands for another mile and a half. For much of the middle portion of the pipeline in Ernie Howard Gulch the pipeline will not be buried, but will be laid above the ground surface in order to minimize physical disturbance. In addition, all possible effort will be made to avoid surface disturbance in the channel proper. Estimated total acreage of disturbance will be no more than 1.85 acres. This project may be completed in April of 2005. If not, it will be completed later in the summer of 2005 or in the spring of 2006. All disturbed areas will be promptly recontoured and revegetated with native Seed mix #3 listed in the table below.

Native Seed Mix # 3			
3	Western wheatgrass (Rosanna) Bluebunch wheatgrass (Whitmar) Thickspike wheatgrass (Critana) Indian ricegrass (Rimrock) Fourwing saltbush (Wytana) Utah sweetvetch	2 2 2 1 1 1	Gravelly 10"-14", Pinyon/Juniper Woodland, Stony Foothills, 147 (Mountain Mahogany)

No Action Alternative: The no-action alternative entails not constructing any of the proposed projects.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT NOT CARRIED FORWARD: none

NEED FOR THE ACTION: The Piceance watergap fence will allow cows to come to water at Piceance Creek and force them to trail out to the southeast to use the uplands. It will also prevent them from using the BLM floodplain and riparian area below there.

The intent of the Open Gulch pipeline and storage system is to provide an alternate dependable water source, to further improve livestock distribution in the North Dry Fork pasture, and aid in achievement of the revegetation goals of the Greasewood emergency fire rehabilitation plan.

The intent of the Ernie Howard pipeline and storage system is to provide an alternative dependable water source, to further improve livestock distribution in the North Dry Fork pasture, and aid in achievement of the revegetation goals of the Greasewood emergency fire rehabilitation plan.

PLAN CONFORMANCE REVIEW: The Proposed Action is subject to and has been reviewed for conformance with the following plan (43 CFR 1610.5, BLM 1617.3):

Name of Plan: White River Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan (ROD/RMP).

Date Approved: July 1, 1997

Decision Number/Page: Livestock Grazing P 2-25

Decision Language: Rangeland improvements will be identified in activity plans. Range improvements are necessary to control livestock use and improve rangeland condition.

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT / ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES / MITIGATION MEASURES:

STANDARDS FOR PUBLIC LAND HEALTH: In January 1997, Colorado Bureau of Land Management (BLM) approved the Standards for Public Land Health. These standards cover upland soils, riparian systems, plant and animal communities, threatened and endangered species, and water quality. Standards describe conditions needed to sustain public land health and relate to all uses of the public lands. Because a standard exists for these five categories, a finding must be made for each of them in an environmental analysis. These findings are located in specific elements listed below:

CRITICAL ELEMENTS

AIR QUALITY

Affected Environment: The Piceance Creek basin has been designated a Prevention of Significant Deterioration (PSD) class II air quality area by the state. The proposed actions will not compromise National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for particulate mater which calls for a maximum 24-hour average to be less than or equal to 150 $\mu g/m^3$.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Temporary reduction in ground cover due to construction of pipeline and fences will leave soils exposed to wind erosion. However, these effects will be minimal in comparison to the consequences of the no action alternative.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: Reduced vegetal cover as a result of overgrazing and fire will leave soils exposed and increases potential for wind erosion. Consequences arising from wind erosion would result in an increased level of particulate mater (fugitive dust).

Mitigation: none

CULTURAL RESOURCES

Affected Environment: There are no recorded cultural resource sites in any of the three proposed project areas. A Class III Pedestrian Survey, 50 feet on each side of the proposed pipeline and the fence line found no new cultural resources. A Class III Pedestrian Survey, 500 feet around the stock and storage pond areas found no new cultural resources.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: A Class III Pedestrian Survey was completed along the flagged route of all three-project areas. There are no recorded cultural resources and no cultural resources were identified.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: None

Mitigation: None

INVASIVE, NON-NATIVE SPECIES

Affected Environment: There are no known noxious weeds in the immediate project area (s). The invasive phraetophyte shrub, salt cedar (*Tamarix ramosissima)* occurs on the floodplain of Piceance Creek. The alien annual cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*) occurs in the lower end of Open Gulch and along the Piceance creek bench as a result of un-revegetated soil disturbance and historic livestock overuse.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The combined projects will create no more than 3.6 acres of earthen disturbance. The actual disturbance will be much likely significantly less than this amount. The areas of earthen disturbance could provide safe sites for the establishment of noxious and invasive species. With prompt revegetation and monitoring, there is little likelihood that noxious weed or invasive species establishment and proliferation will take place over the short or long term.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There will be no change from the present situation.

Mitigation: In addition to the mitigation in the proposed action: The project area will be monitored on a yearly basis for the occurrence of noxious weeds and/or invasive species. All such species which occur will be eradicated using materials and methods approved in advance by the authorized officer.

MIGRATORY BIRDS

Affected Environment: The proposed action is encompassed largely by basin big sagebrush with low densities of greasewood scattered throughout. Herbaceous ground cover is comprised of western wheatgrass, basin wild rye, Sandberg bluegrass and squirreltail. Immature pinyon-juniper is located along the ridgetops which border Open Gulch and Ernie Howard Gulch with mature Douglas-fir scattered throughout the mid-portion of Ernie Howard Gulch. Blue-gray gnatcatcher, Brewer's sparrow and Vesper's sparrow are associated with these habitats although these shrublands typically support few nesting birds. There are no species of high conservation interest associated with this project. Construction activities are scheduled to be completed by mid-May and therefore should have no conceivable influence on nesting activities.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: It is unlikely the proposed action would have any negative impacts on nesting activities as all construction activities are scheduled to be completed prior to the breeding season.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: The no-action alternative would not have any conceivable influence on migratory birds.

Mitigation: None

THREATENED, ENDANGERED, AND SENSITIVE ANIMAL SPECIES (includes a finding on Standard 4)

Affected Environment: There are no threatened, endangered or sensitive animal species that inhabit or derive important benefit from these sites.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The proposed action would have no conceivable influence on special status animals or associated habitat.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: The no action alternative would have no conceivable influence on special status animals or associated habitat.

Mitigation: None

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for Threatened & Endangered species: The proposed action would have no effective influence on populations or habitat associated with special status species.

WASTES, HAZARDOUS OR SOLID

Affected Environment: There are no known hazardous or other solid wastes on the subject lands. No hazardous materials are known to have been used, stored or disposed of at sites included in the project area.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: No listed or extremely hazardous materials in excess of threshold quantities are proposed for use in this project. While commercial preparations of fuels and lubricants proposed for use may contain some hazardous constituents, they would be stored, used and transported in a manner consistent with applicable laws, and the generation of hazardous wastes would not be anticipated. Solid wastes would be properly disposed of.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: No hazardous or other solid wastes would be generated under the no-action alternative.

Mitigation: The applicant shall be required to collect and properly dispose of any solid wastes generated by the proposed actions.

WATER QUALITY, SURFACE AND GROUND (includes a finding on Standard 5)

Affected Environment: Surface Water: The proposed water developments are located within grazing allotments 06005 and 06007 of the North Dry Fork pasture in the Piceance Creek catchment area. Open Gulch and Ernie Howard Gulch have been pinpointed as the desired locations for pipeline, and storage facilities. Pump locations would be located in the Dry Fork of Piceance Creek (servicing Ernie Howard Gulch) and the main stem of Piceance Creek (servicing Open Gulch). Ernie Howard Gulch is a tributary to the Dry Fork of Piceance Creek which is a tributary to Piceance Creek (tributary of the White River). Open Gulch is a tributary to Piceance Creek (tributary of the White River).

Open Gulch is listed as a tributary of the main stem of Piceance Creek - segment 16 of the White River basin. The state of Colorado has classified Open Gulch as "Use Protected" and further classified this segment as beneficial to the following uses: Aquatic life warm 2, Recreation 2, and Agriculture. The pump location for proposed action #2 (Open Gulch development) is

located in the main stem of Piceance Creek and is listed as a tributary of the White River – segment 15 of the White River basin. Segment 15 has beneficial uses as follows: Aquatic live warm 2, Recreation 1b, and Agriculture. Both segments 15 and 16 have been given table values addressing water quality. These values indicate numeric standards for allowable physical, biological, inorganic and metal concentrations in surface water as addressed by the state of Colorado's water quality standards.

Ernie Howard Gulch is listed as a tributary of the Dry Fork of Piceance Creek –segment 17 of the White River basin. The state of Colorado has classified segment 17 as "Use Protected" and further classified this segment as beneficial to the following uses: Aquatic life cold 2, Recreation 2, and Agriculture. Segment 17 also has been given water quality parameters listed as table values.

Ground Water: As outlined in the proposed actions, the pipeline being constructed to proposed storage tanks would be buried a maximum of 1-2 ft. below the ground surface. At this depth only shallow local ground water originating from runoff and/or storm events would be encountered.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Consequences of the proposed action are temporary removal of ground cover in construction of fences and pipelines. Reductions in vegetation density, flow deflectors and sediment traps will likely increase the erosive potential of runoff and raindrop impact during storm events.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: Environmental consequences of no action would be accelerated erosion rates and increased sediment yields in the Dry Fork of Piceance Creek and Piceance Creek. Destruction of existing flood plains/riparian vegetation as a result of livestock grazing will decrease stream bank stability. Decreased stream bank stability leaves sediment exposed to fluvial processes and increases potential for mass wasting to occur.

Due to the reduction in ground cover via the Greasewood fire in 2004 the presence of livestock in burned areas will hinder revegetation efforts leaving soils further exposed to erosion. In addition, soils already susceptible to erosion will also be subjected to a high rate of mechanical erosion due to livestock's preferred travel routes (e.g. trails).

Mitigation: To minimize potential erosion, it is suggested that the placement of pipeline lay within previously disturbed areas or areas lacking significant ground cover (e.g. two track running up Ernie Howard Gulch). In addition, constructing flow deflectors and sediment traps by replacing debris/litter from cleared areas back to its approximate location will help to mitigate impacts of erosive events prior to reestablishment of vegetation.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for water quality: The water quality within the area of the proposed action currently meets water quality standards established by the state. The proposed action will potentially improve water quality in these stream segments.

WETLANDS AND RIPARIAN ZONES (includes a finding on Standard 2)

Affected Environment: The west part of Proposed Action #1 (approximately 300 feet) is located in the riparian area of Piceance Creek. The reach where the project occurs was inventoried in 1995 and determined to be in proper functioning condition.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The overall effect of the proposed action(s) will be to enhance the riparian characteristics of all riparian areas with the North Dry fork allotment because, with the exception of the water gap created by the proposed fence (Proposed Action #1), livestock use of all riparian areas will be diverted to the uplands, reducing both trampling impacts and forage use on those areas.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: The will be no change from the present situation.

Mitigation: For the watergap fenceline, only hand clearing will take place on the floodplain.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for riparian systems: The riparian area currently meets the Standard and following implementation of this project, while the area of the water gap receives more concentrated use, on an overall basis, the benefit to the entire reach should outweigh any negative impact created at the watergap site.

CRITICAL ELEMENTS NOT PRESENT OR NOT AFFECTED:

No ACEC's, flood plains, prime and unique farmlands, or Wild and Scenic Rivers, threatened, endangered or sensitive plants exist within the area affected by the proposed action. For threatened, endangered and sensitive plant species Public Land Health Standard is not applicable since neither the proposed nor the no-action alternative would have any influence on populations of, or habitats potentially occupied by, special status plants. There are also no Native American religious or environmental justice concerns associated with the proposed action.

NON-CRITICAL ELEMENTS

The following elements **must** be addressed due to the involvement of Standards for Public Land Health:

SOILS (includes a finding on Standard 1)

Affected Environment: Soils in the area of the proposed action #1 are in the Havre loam map unit. These soils are loams, clay loams and silty clay loams with inclusions of Barcus channery loamy sand and Glendive fine sandy loam formed in alluvium from sandstone and shale parent material. These soils are moderately deep and well drained with moderately high productive potential. They are primarily associated with the Foothill swale ecological site.

Soils at the site of proposed action #2 and proposed action #3 are primarily in the Glendive fine sandy loam map unit. Soils in the drainages proper (Piceance Creek, Open Gulch Dry Fork, and Ernie Howard) and on the floodplain are in the Glendive map unit. Soils on the uplands and slopes are in the Torriorthents- Rock Outcrop complex. The Glendive fine sandy loam soils are deep, well drained soils formed in alluvium with moderately high productive potential. The associated ecological site is Foothill Swale. The Torriorthents- Rock Outcrop soils are highly variable and are primarily decomposed shale and sandstone with inclusions of Moyerson stoney clay loam and Glendive fine sandy loam Typically these soils are shallow channery loams that have low water holding capacity and are excessively drained. The associated ecological site is Stony Foothills.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The proposed action will create a maximum of 3.6 acres of earthen disturbance. The primary negative impact that could occur as a result of this disturbance would be if no revegetation were to occur and cheatgrass and/or noxious weeds were to invade the site(s). With the proposed mitigation, this is unlikely to occur. The watershed and allotment wide long term impact on soils and their properties would be beneficial due primarily to improved patterns of livestock distribution and its consequent positive impact on plant cover, productivity, and thus, soil protection.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There will be no change from the present situation.

Mitigation: See the proposed action, invasive and non-native species mitigation. No additional mitigation is recommended.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for upland soils: Soils in the project area(s) meet the Standard. Implementation of the proposed projects will enhance the soil site characteristics so that our capability to meet the Standard in the future will be enhanced.

VEGETATION (includes a finding on Standard 3)

Affected Environment: Vegetation at the project sites is dominated by basin big sagebrush and greasewood. The understory on the Piceance Creek, Dry Fork and lower end of Open Gulch has scattered western wheatgrass, Sandberg bluegrass, squirreltail and cheatgrass throughout. About 75% of the expected disturbance will occur on the Foothill Swale ecological sites in early seral condition. These sites are not meeting the Standard for Rangeland Health primarily because of the significant presence of cheatgrass in the plant composition. The remaining 25% of the disturbance will occur on Foothill Swale or Stony Foothill ecological sites in mid seral condition. These sites meet the Standard.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The proposed action will disturb /destroy some of the existing vegetation on the three project sites. The vegetation destroyed will be principally basin big sagebrush and greasewood. With the proposed mitigation, the net effect of the disturbance will be to improve the plant cover and composition on the early seral sites and maintain or improve the plant cover and composition on the mid seral sites that are actually

disturbed by construction. On an ecological site wide and watershed and allotment basis, the proposed action will generally improve potential to meet the Standard on all ecological sites except those early seral sites previously identified as having crossed the threshold of plant community change.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There will be no change from the present situation.

Mitigation: The project area will be monitored on a yearly basis for the occurrence of noxious weeds and/or invasive species. All such species which occur will be eradicated using materials and methods approved in advance by the Field Manager.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for plant and animal communities (partial, see also Wildlife, Aquatic and Wildlife, Terrestrial)*:* As described above, some of the plant communities directly impacted by disturbance do not meet the Standard. It is likely that revegetation will improve that part of these communities; however, because the remainders of these communities have crossed the threshold of plant community change, they will not significantly change as a result of the proposed action. The remaining ecological sites, both locally and on a watershed wide basis that are presently in a mid or late seral state can be expected to improve as a result of project implementation. On a watershed, pasture and allotment basis, successful completion of the project(s) will enhance our ability to meet the Standard both in the short and long term.

WILDLIFE, AQUATIC (includes a finding on Standard 3)

Affected Environment: Approximately 300 ft of proposed action #1 would involve aquatic habitats along Piceance Creek.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Proposed action #1 would result in increased livestock use at the site of the water gap however, overall this project would decrease the duration of livestock use (from 3 months to approximately 2 weeks) below the proposed water gap, enhancing channel restoration processes. Heavy machinery will not be involved in the construction of the fenceline therefore, the integrity of the channel should not be compromised.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: Under the no action alternative heavy seasonal livestock use would continue along the lower portion of Piceance Creek maintaining the current condition of the channel.

Mitigation: None

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for plant and animal communities (partial, see also Vegetation and Wildlife, Terrestrial): Currently the site meets the Standard for aquatic habitat. While development of the water gap may result in more concentrated use by livestock, overall this project should have no conceivable influence on the condition or function of aquatic habitats

or wildlife associated with these habitats and therefore, would have no influence on continued maintenance of associated land health standards.

WILDLIFE, TERRESTRIAL (includes a finding on Standard 3)

Affected Environment: The bottomlands of Open Gulch and Ernie Howard Gulch are dominated by basin big sagebrush and to a lesser extent greasewood. The understory along the lower end of Ernie Howard and Open Gulch is sparse and comprised of scattered western wheatgrass and one seed rice grass. Ground cover along the upper portion of Ernie Howard Gulch is uniformly covered with basin wildrye and blue bunch wheatgrass. The ridges which border Ernie Howard and Open Gulch are comprised of immature pinyon-juniper, with mature Douglas-fir scattered throughout the middle portion of Ernie Howard Gulch. All three proposed sites are located in mule deer severe winter range, however construction is scheduled to take place outside of the critical timeframe. Two inactive nests were located in large diameter Douglas-fir along the ridge bordering Ernie Howard Gulch, however both nest were in severe disrepair with no indication of recent use by raptors.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The proposed action will involve the disturbance/removal of basin big sagebrush and greasewood, species which do not constitute prime forage for big game. Reclamation of these sites would likely provide herbaceous ground cover which would be particularly beneficial to big game during the spring months.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: Under the no action alternative livestock would continue to use the newly seeded sites, impeding the recovery of herbaceous understory in the burned areas.

Mitigation: All sites should be restored to their preexisting condition such that subsequent vehicle traffic is effectively deterred.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for plant and animal communities (partial, see also Vegetation and Wildlife, Aquatic): This project should have no conceivable influence on the condition or function of terrestrial habitats or wildlife associated with these habitats and therefore, would have no influence on continued maintenance of associated land health standards.

OTHER NON-CRITICAL ELEMENTS: For the following elements, only those brought forward for analysis will be addressed further.

Non-Critical Element	NA or Not Present	Applicable or Present, No Impact	Applicable & Present and Brought Forward for Analysis
Access and Transportation		X	
Cadastral Survey	X		
Fire Management	X		

Non-Critical Element	NA or Not Present	Applicable or Present, No Impact	Applicable & Present and Brought Forward for Analysis
Forest Management	X		
Geology and Minerals	X		
Hydrology/Water Rights			X
Law Enforcement		X	
Noise		X	
Paleontology	X		
Rangeland Management			X
Realty Authorizations			X
Recreation	X		
Socio-Economics		X	
Visual Resources			X
Wild Horses	X		

HYDROLOGY AND WATER RIGHTS

Affected Environment: Proposed action #2 is located entirely on BLM land calls for water usage from the Piceance Cr. Water Gap – 6027B (existing water right). A new water right is not necessary for proposed action #2 as long as the following guidelines are met:

1. The point of diversion for the pipeline must be located within 200 feet of the decreed point of diversion, which is: NE NE NE, Sec. 22, T1N R97W, 50 feet south of the north section line and 100 feet west of the east section line.

2. Any return flows from the project (overflow from troughs, etc.), must return to the Piceance Creek watershed.

3. Water can only be diverted with this system when the 1995 water right is in priority. Diversion may not occur when more senior water rights are not getting water.

The only senior water rights that would affect the diversion at water gap 6027B are the White River City Ditch and White River Mesa Ditch which are both located downstream of the proposed action. With the proposed action being to divert water during the spring months (roughly April 20-June 10), conflict with senior water rights during this time should me minimal with the exception being in years of extreme drought conditions.

Proposed action #3 originates on Division of Wildlife (DOW) property and requires an easement for pipeline construction and water usage out of the Dry Fork of Piceance Creek.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The proposed actions for the Open Gulch and Ernie Howard Gulch developments call for minimal amounts of water. However, in years of *extreme drought* additional reduction in flow due to uptake by the proposed actions may compromise water quality. Reduced flow levels (during late spring and early

summer) could result in increased water temperature, decreased dissolved oxygen (DO) levels, and increased salinity.

Environmental consequences of no action: The environmental consequences of no action would result in destruction of existing flood plains/riparian vegetation, decreased stream bank stability and high sediment yields.

Mitigation: Comply with water quality regulations and water right laws (guidelines described in the affected environment) as addressed by the state. If senior water rights restrict the time period in which water is needed, consider pumping at other times of the year and using a storage tank to hold water until needed.

RANGELAND MANAGEMENT

Affected Environment: The locations of the proposed actions are in the west half of the North Dry Fork pastures of the Dry Fork AMP. The west part of the pasture is used by the Shults and Lopez cattle operations for about 1 and ½ months on a yearly basis as part of their yearly grazing operation on Public and private lands. This pasture and the grazing system were analyzed in the Shults /Lopez Dry Fork Allotment Management Plan /Permit Renewal EA # CO-110- 01-051.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: All parts of the proposed action will improve livestock distribution by providing dependable water sources during the period of scheduled livestock use. The Open Gulch and Ernie Howard water systems will also make it possible to rotate livestock use within the North Dry Fork pasture/allotment and allow for full establishment of desirable plants on the Greasewood burn. The net effect of project implementation will be to facilitate achievement of vegetation management objectives of the Dry Fork AMP and the WRFO RMP.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: I f no action is taken, revegetation of the Greasewood burn area could be compromised by unintended livestock use.

Mitigation: All areas of earthen disturbance will be recontoured and revegetated with Native Seed mix #3. The project area will be monitored on a yearly basis for the occurrence of noxious weeds and/or invasive species. All such species which occur will be eradicated using materials and methods approved in advance by the authorized officer.

REALTY AUTHORIZATIONS

Affected Environment: There are rights-of-way that will be crossed by the proposed action.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: In T. 1 N., R. 96 W., Section 30, right-of-way COC096918 is a telephone line (Qwest). T. 1 N., R. 97 W., Section 11 has three

rights-of-way that the proposed project crosses, COC52705 CIG pipeline, COC18423 KN Energy pipeline, and COC096918 Qwest telephone line.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: Under the no action alternative, there would not be any impacts.

Mitigation: The Colorado "One Call" procedure will have to be enacted before any construction that involves digging can be started (800-922-1987).

VISUAL RESOURCE

Affected Environment: The proposed action is within a VRM class III area. The objective of this class is to partially retain the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape should be moderate. Management activities may attract attention but should not dominate the view of the casual observer. Changes should repeat the basic elements found in the predominant natural features of the characteristic landscape

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The proposed action is small in scale relative to the surrounding landscape; therefore, any modifications will be unseen to the casual observer, and VRM III objectives will be met. Furthermore, any disturbed vegetation will return making the action virtually unnoticeable within a period of a few years.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: No impact on visual resources.

Mitigation: Remove as little vegetation as possible during construction.

CUMULATIVE IMPACTS SUMMARY:

The cumulative impact of project implementation will be to enhance vegetation cover, composition and production on a watershed, pasture and allotment-wide basis due to improved livestock distribution, grazing management and successful revegetation of the Greasewood fire.

PERSONS / AGENCIES CONSULTED: Bill Dunham, Mike Lopez, Lonnie and Todd Shults, Claude Wood, Dan Prenzlow (CDOW)

INTERDISCIPLINARY REVIEW:

Name	Title	Area of Responsibility
Nate Dieterich	Hydrologist	Air Quality
Tamara Meagley	Natural Resource Specialist	Areas of Critical Environmental Concern
Tamara Meagley	Natural Resource Specialist	Threatened and Endangered Plant Species
Gabrielle Elliott	Archaeologist	Cultural Resources Paleontological Resources
Mark Hafkenschiel	Rangeland Management Specialist	Invasive, Non-Native Species, Soils, Vegetation, Rangeland Management, Wetlands and Riparian Zones
Lisa Belmonte	Wildlife Biologist	Migratory Birds
Lisa Belmonte	Wildlife Biologist	Threatened, Endangered and Sensitive Animal Species, Wildlife
Bo Brown	Hazmat Collateral	Wastes, Hazardous or Solid
Nate Dieterich	Hydrologist	Water Quality, Surface and Ground Hydrology and Water Rights
Chris Ham	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Wilderness
Lisa Belmonte	Wildlife Biologist	Wildlife Terrestrial and Aquatic
Chris Ham	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Access and Transportation
Ken Holsinger	Natural Resource Specialist	Fire Management
Robert Fowler	Forester	Forest Management
Paul Daggett	Mining Engineer	Geology and Minerals
Penny Brown	Realty Specialist	Realty Authorizations
Chris Ham	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Recreation, Visual Resources

Finding of No Significant Impact/Decision Record (FONSI/DR)

CO-110-2005-040-EA

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)/RATIONALE: The environmental assessment and analyzing the environmental effects of the proposed action have been reviewed. The approved mitigation measures (listed below) result in a Finding of No Significant Impact on the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not necessary to further analyze the environmental effects of the proposed action.

DECISION/RATIONALE: It is my decision to approve construction the Open Gulch pipeline and storage system, the Piceance Creek watergap, and the Ernie Howard pipeline and storage system subject to the described mitigation measures because these projects individually and as a whole will facilitate achievement of the vegetation management objectives of the Dry Fork AMP, the WRFO RMP and the Greasewood Fire Rehabilitation Plan.

MITIGATION MEASURES:

1. The project area will be monitored on a yearly basis for the occurrence of noxious weeds and/or invasive species. All such species which occur will be eradicated using materials and methods approved in advance by the authorized officer.

Recommended Native Seed Mix # 3			
3	Western wheatgrass (Rosanna) Bluebunch wheatgrass (Whitmar) Thickspike wheatgrass (Critana) Indian ricegrass (Rimrock) Fourwing saltbush (Wytana) Utah sweetvetch	2 2 2 1 1 1	Gravelly 10"-14", Pinyon/Juniper Woodland, Stony Foothills, 147 (Mountain Mahogany)

2. The applicant shall be required to collect and properly dispose of any solid wastes generated by the proposed actions.

3. To minimize potential erosion, it is suggested that the placement of pipeline lay within previously disturbed areas or areas lacking significant ground cover (e.g. two track running up Ernie Howard Gulch).

4. Construct flow deflectors and sediment traps by replacing debris/litter from cleared areas back to its approximate location to help mitigate impacts of erosive events prior to reestablishment of vegetation.

5. For the watergap fenceline, only hand clearing will take place on the floodplain.

6. All sites should be restored to their preexisting condition such that subsequent vehicle traffic is effectively deterred.

7. Comply with water quality regulations and water right laws (guidelines described in the affected environment) as addressed by the state. If senior water rights restrict the time period in which water is needed, consider pumping at other times of the year and using a storage tank to hold water until needed.

8. The Colorado "One Call" procedure will have to be enacted before any construction that involves digging can be started (800-922-1987).

9. Remove as little vegetation as possible during construction.

COMPLIANCE/MONITORING: Dry Fork allotment (06005, 06007) rangeland monitoring studies.

NAME OF PREPARER: Mark Hafkenschiel 4/6/05

NAME OF ENVIRONMENTAL COORDINATOR: Caroline Hollowed

SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL: Kent E. Walter
Field Manager

DATE SIGNED: 4/20/05

ATTACHMENTS: Project maps (2)
Location map of the proposed action.

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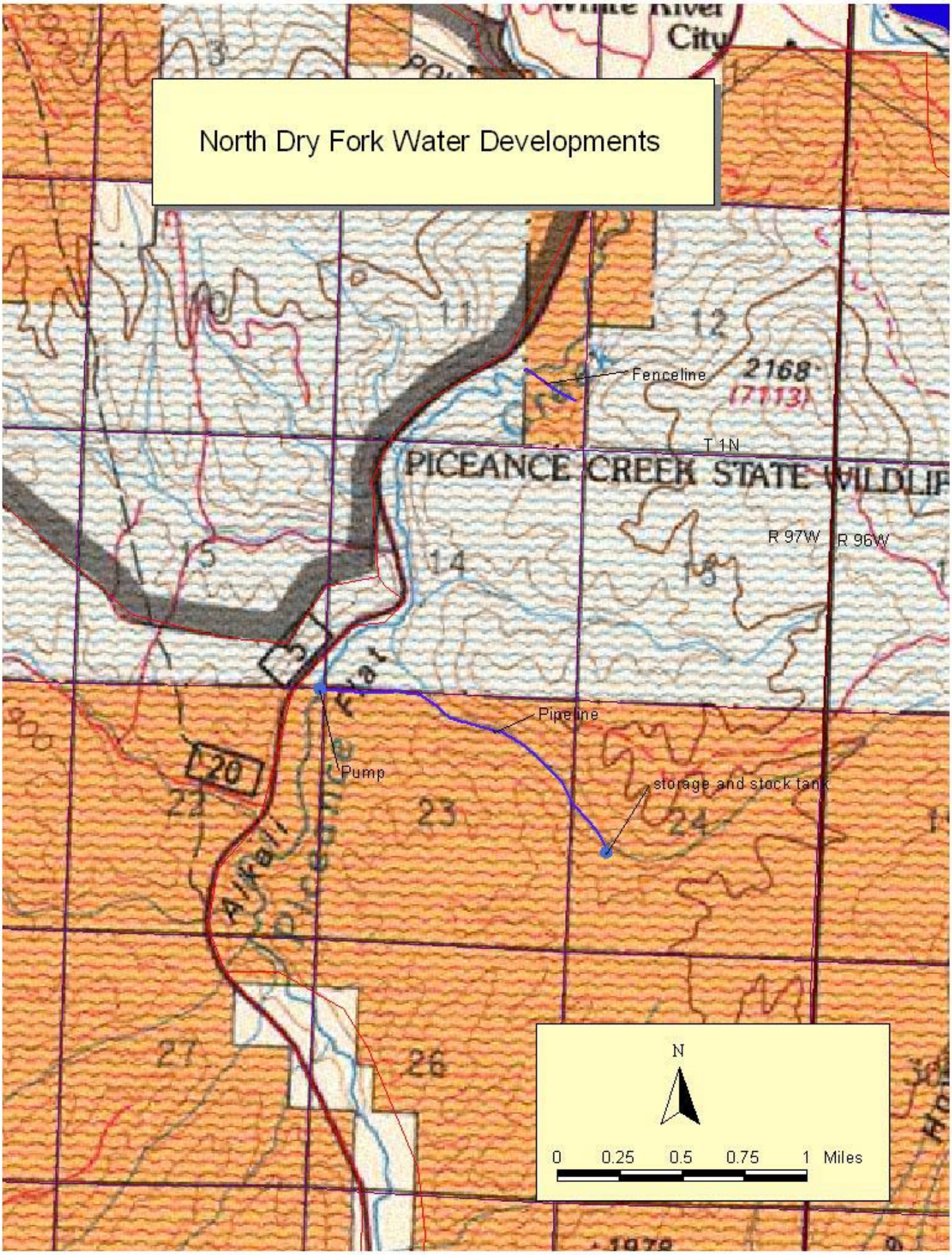
North Dry Fork Water Developments
Fenceline
Pipeline
Pump
storage and stock tank
PICEANCE CREEK STATE WILDLIF
T 1N
R 97W
R 96W
2168
(7113)
N
0
0.25
0.5
0.75
1 Miles

Location of CO-110-05-040-EA

North Dry Fork Water Developments

0.25 0 0.25 Miles

1:40000

Map compiled on March 24, 2005

Disclaimer:

The BLM does not guarantee the accuracy, completeness, or timeliness of the information shown and shall not be liable for any loss or injury resulting from reliance upon the information shown.

Bureau of Land Management

Location of Proposed Action
CO-110-2005-040-EA